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A comparison of the general index number for the 230 commodities with the similar index number computed from the American list shows that relative prices in Canada did not, on the average, fall quite so low in 1897 nor rise quite so high in 1907 as did relative prices in the United States (and this notwithstanding the much greater importance of agricultural products in the Canadian list). A further, and possibly less valid, comparison with Mr. Sauerbeck's index number, recalculated to the base of average prices in the decade 1890-1899, indicates that since 1899 the movement of prices in Canada has been about midway between the movement of prices in England and in the United States. But it is beyond the scope of this review to even summarize the more important results of this thoroughly praiseworthy investigation. In Table III, however, one of the more important summary tables of the Report is reprinted. It may be expected that the report will be utilized in connection with the American tables by those interested in the effect of the tariff on the movements of particular groups of prices in the United States,—and there is no reason why it should not be, if due account is taken of the many and frequently subtle difficulties in comparisons of that kind.

An appendix of seventy pages contains a "Memorandum on the construction of an index number of commodity prices, with a review of important British and foreign index numbers, and a statement relating to the causes and effects of variations in prices." This may be commended as accurate and well balanced, although it contains nothing not conveniently accessible elsewhere. The list of index numbers that have been constructed in the United States omits the important one compiled by Prof. John R. Commons,* as well as Prof. W. C. Mitchell's greatly improved retabulations of the results of the Aldrich inquiry.†

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Two recent volumes that should be of especial interest to teachers of statistics are a *Primer of Statistics*, by W. P. and E. M. Elderton (London: A. and C. Black, 1910), and Mr. A. L. Bowley's *An Elementary Manual of Statistics* (London: Macdonald and Evans, 1910).

The *Primer of Statistics* is designed to carry out a suggestion of Sir Francis Galton (who contributes a preface to the book) to the effect that the elementary concepts of the modern system of biometric statistics might be explained in a much simpler fashion than has been usual. In this aim the authors have succeeded: the book is, indeed, a veritable primer. Frequency distributions and their important constants, such as the median, quartile, mode, standard deviation, and coefficient of correlation, are explained in a very elementary way and are illustrated by concrete examples of the distribution of cricket scores and of simple biometric data. The discussion does not penetrate into the subject far

* *Quarterly Bulletin of the Bureau of Economic Research*, July, October, 1900.

† "Gold, Prices and Wages under the Greenback Standard," *Publications of the University of California, Economics*, Vol. I.

enough to be of service to one who wishes to know how to handle frequency distributions in actual statistical investigation. It will probably have achieved its purpose if it appreciably enlarges the audience to which an exposition of the results of the use of these methods will be intelligible. The authors tread on dangerous ground (for an elementary treatise) when, like others of their school, they suggest the abandonment of the use of the "probable error of an average" in favor of the "standard deviation of an average." Their statement (p. 78) that the use of the older constant assumes that the frequency distribution dealt with follows the normal curve of error is thoroughly misleading, for it takes no account of the frequently found conditions under which averages of quantities not distributed in accordance with the normal law will themselves follow this law. Moreover, the "probable error" has certain advantages of its own. (On this general subject see the papers by Professor Edgeworth "On the Probable Errors of Frequency Constants," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. lxxi, Parts 2, 3, and 4.)

Mr. Bowley's new book differs from his well-known *Elements of Statistics*, not only in its greatly diminished mathematical apparatus, but also in its different purpose and scope. It may be described as a handbook of statistical criticism. The first part deals with the elementary statistical processes,—averaging, tabulation, the use of diagrams and the like, but with special emphasis throughout upon the necessity of recognizing and stating the limitations of the accuracy of the data used and of the processes themselves. The second part is a survey of the more important classes of English official statistics. How the statistics are gathered, what they actually mean, their inherent limitations and the kinds of inferences that safely may be based on them are all stated with clearness and precision and with pertinent concrete illustrations. The book is hardly constructive enough to serve as a formal text-book, but it is a good book to put into the hands of students or of others who are entering upon their statistical apprenticeship. Some of the fundamental criticisms of English statistics should be useful to all statisticians. We greatly need a book dealing in similar fashion with American statistics or, better yet, with official statistics in general.

A. A. Y.